



GRIZZLY GOUGE

OFFICIAL REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5 NEWSLETTER

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The SITREP

October was another busy month for the Marines and Sailors of Regimental Combat Team 5 as they continued to support partnered operations in southern Helmand province. Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan government have made significant strides in both capacity and capability over the last month.

Afghan National Security Forces and Marines and sailors of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment swept through the Badulla Qulp area of northern Marjah during a clearing operation Oct. 1-4.

The operation, dubbed Zangle Washat, allowed Afghan and coalition forces to increase their presence in the area and, in turn, deny insurgents the ability to move freely with narcotics, weapons or IED making materials. Badulla Qulp contains multiple canals, numerous fields, thick vegetation and an assortment of compounds. The unforgiving terrain is a key reason why the enemy has chosen to exploit this area, using it as both a safe haven and hiding place for illegal materials.

Leadership from ANSF and 3/6 held impromptu shuras with village elders in order to explain the presence of the partnered force. Battalion



Corporal Ivan D. Garciamunoz, Cpl. Patrick J. Moley, Cpl. Joseph L. Tate recite the Non-Commissioned Officer's creed with Sgt. Joshua Virola, the fires communication chief during a promotion ceremony here, Oct. 1. Photo by Lance Cpl. Ammon Carter

commander, Lt. Col. Daniel Schmitt, also took the opportunity to remind the elders why the U.S. initially sent forces into Afghanistan a decade ago.

"Originally Marines came to Afghanistan to find the individuals who attacked our country and restore our honor," Schmitt said. "You will hear lies that Americans are here to steal from you and steal your religion. Watch our actions and make your own decisions, as we are here to give to Afghanistan."

Also in Marjah, the Afghan government recently opened several schools, as student enrollment has steadily increased from a year ago.

District residents celebrated more than six school openings in the past month. Government representatives, local residents, students and Marines with 3/6, gathered on several occasions to commemorate ribbon cutting ceremonies at various locations.

In Garmsir, more than 100 local men attended a wheat distribution shura at the district

center, Oct. 8. The event was part of a series of shuras held throughout Helmand by Provincial Governor Gulab Mangal to promote the growth of wheat and other licit crops ahead of the coming poppy season.

The initiative to the counter poppy growth began in 2008. Eliminating poppy growth in Helmand would deal a huge blow to the narcotics trade and, in turn, a key source of insurgent funding in the province.

Afghan National Army officers with 2nd Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps participated in a platoon commander's course offered by the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment Embedded Training Team Oct. 8 - 19. The course was the first of its kind in Garmsir district.

This course gave Marine officers a chance to share their leadership values and habits and help the ANA officers become more effective and proficient as leaders in the Afghan army.

On Oct. 12 and 13, Afghan and Marine commanders from around southern Helmand province gathered for a commander's conference at RCT-5 headquarters here at Camp Dwyer (see page 9 for full story).



COMBAT OUTPOST JAKER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Payson, Ariz. native Lance Cpl. Ammon Carter, an RCT-5 combat cameraman attached to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, looks back to check the rear of a patrol in Nawa district, Helmand province. The Marines were en route to the banks of the nearby Helmand River. Photo by Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde.

See SITREP on Page 12

The Monthly Moto

Greetings friends and families of the Fighting Fifth,

I hope this letter finds you all in the best of health and spirits. As for all of us here in sunny Southern Afghanistan, we're fighting the fight and doing even better than our first two months.

Well our third month here has been interesting to say the least and even more productive than our first two months. During the month of October we've promoted, reenlisted and awarded a number of our Warriors.

Our first group of stellar performers is our Noncommissioned Officer, Marine and Sailor of the 4th quarter of 2011. Sgt Adeyemi or Sgt A by his friends was selected as our Noncommissioned Officer of the quarter for his overall performance and contribution to our mission success. Sgt A is a native of New York and has an interesting childhood. He and his parents moved to Nigeria, Africa where he grew up. Sgt A would return to the United States and enlist in the Marine Corps. He has a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and is our Wire Chief for the Communications Section. The next young man is Lance Corporal Daniel Kujanpaa of Plymouth, Massachusetts. He's one of the few Combat Camera Marines in our command and he was selected as our Marine of the quarter from a poll of nearly a hundred Marines. LCpl Kujanpaa is a fine young man with a bright future in the Corps. Our next over achiever is Hospital Corpsman Second Class Timothy Walsh of Weymouth, Massachusetts is our Sailor of the quarter. HM2 Walsh was selected from a pool of 267 Petty Officers in the Division as the overall Sailor of the quarter. He has as bright future in the Navy.

The next group of fine young men is our Marines promoted to their current rank for October. The most senior of our Marines is Captain Evan Ota. Capt Ota is a native of Hawaii and the Executive Officer for Headquarters Company, 5th Marine Regiment who currently holds the billet of Personal Security Detail Officer in Charge. He and his Marines provide security to the Commanding Officer and his staff and they are doing a fantastic job. Capt Ota was also decorated for his superior performance from his last command for his duties as a Platoon Commander. In my previous new letter, I had made mention of our newly promoted Marines for 1 October. Corporals Ivan Garciamunoz, Brent Garrison, Forrest Green, Patrick Moley and Joseph Tate were all promoted to their present grade on the first of the month for their past achievements and their potential for added responsibility. Our final group is our Lance Corporals, LCpl Alexander Akhromtsev, Jaron Cofield, Stefan Donawa, Kendrick Johnson, Shawn Swigert, Matthew Truitt and Michael Wood was all promoted to their present grade. These young men are the muscles of our sections and they get things done, I can tell you that I'm proud of them all.

Well no month goes by without Marines reenlisting to stay in the Corps. As a careerist myself, I'm personally proud of these young men who have chosen to stay Marine. SSgt Jeremy Smith, SSgt Felipe Tremillo Jr. and Cpl Sean Glasgow have all stepped up to stay Marine. Our hats are off to these fine young men. Speaking of fine Americans, I want to brag on our Dana Point Support Group located in Dana Point, California. Mr. Pete Hammer is the founder and President of our support group and he's surrounded with a com-



Sergeant Major Ernest Hoopii addresses the Marines and sailors of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment during a battlefield circulation at Combat Outpost Turbett, Sept. 24

pany of warfighters himself. In the last 65 days, we've received hundreds of care packages with tons of supplies. Mr. Hammer's talented team consists of Terry Rifkin, John and Wanda Hicks and I can't brag on this group of angels enough. I would fail in my duties if I didn't mention the fact that we now have a number of other supporters, mostly folks just interested in caring for Marines. Special recognition goes out to Ms. Bruce Hemp, Mr. Robert Esquinas, Mr. Jack McHugh, Ms. Patricia Mueller, Ms. Anita Dice and numerous other folks from around the country. Thank you so very much for all your love, support and supplies.

Anyways chugging along, this month we had reminisced the passing of the 28th anniversary of the Beirut bombing. Other milestones soon to come are our Corps' 236th birthday taking place on the 10th of November. Our Company First Sergeant, 1st Sgt Donald Shaeffer will put together a cake cutting ceremony to commemorate the occasion. Although we'll be forward deployed this year, you can best bet that next year's birthday ceremony will be done in style with our families.

As always, I want to thank our Family Readiness Officer, Ms. Kimberly Merkel and her team of Family Readiness Advisors who are doing a superb job in keeping our families and friends advised on all matter concerning RCT-5 Marines and sailors. If you've got any questions or concerns, you can always review our website at <http://www.i-mef.usmc.mil/external/1stmardiv/5thmarreg/> or our Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/RegimentalCombatTeam5.

Finally on behalf of my family and me, thank you for supporting our Marines and sailors. We are truly blessed to have you watch our backs as we move forward on our mission.

Semper Fidelis!
Ernest Hoopii
Sergeant Major
Regimental Combat Team 5



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Regimental Combat Team 5 Marines and sailors pose for a photo with National Football League players Marco Rivera and R.W. McQuarters and Washington Redskins Cheerleaders Amanda, Britni, Kristin and Tena during their Armed Forces Entertainment tour here, Oct. 28. Photo by Lance Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - U.S. Marine Cpl. Joshua Drews, Regimental Combat Team 5 communication platoon, performs routine maintenance on communications equipment here, Oct. 19. Marines with the RCT-5 communication platoon conduct daily cleaning and maintenance of mission essential equipment. Photo by Lance Cpl. Ammon Carter.



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Sergeant Michael A. Kinne, a 27-year-old assistant fires chief and native of Neenah, Wis. with Regimental Combat Team 5, raised the spirit of Halloween here with his unique Batman-themed Jack-O-Lantern. His design is both a celebration of his favorite holiday and hero. Kinne has also served tours in Iraq, Jordan and spent a year in Okinawa. Photo by Lance Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

FRO-Zone

"It ain't so 'til it's from the FRO"

Hey there, Families and Friends!

The month of November marks the quarter-way-through point for our deployment. Depending on your mood you can celebrate with a "yay!" or heave a great sigh, "what, is that all?!" In reality it's a mix of both. These long deployments are a marathon – we are past the initial warm-up, now setting a steady pace for the distance ahead.

Showered with appreciation - On October 16th we honored 13 of our ladies and babies with a baby shower put on 5th Marines' style. Family Readiness volunteers and support networks doted on our guests raining down attention and great times.

Happy Birthday, Marine Families! – It is long-standing tradition that Marines celebrate the USMC birthday no matter where they are, whether that is sharing a pound cake from an MRE (Meal Ready to Eat) in the field, or a formal ball in a classy banquet room. In that spirit we're not letting the deployment keep us from celebrating. Join us for our November 10th "Ladies Night Out" birthday dinner event in Carlsbad, CA at Olive Garden. Sign up with FR Assistant, KC Winward rct5fra.s1s2@gmail.com Get a sitter for the kids and join us for a night of relaxed fun.



We are making our list, checking it twice – our Christmas party planning is underway and is only 6 weeks away! Save the date, December 10th, 4-7pm with more details coming later this month. Our volunteer team is doing the planning and we always have room for more – more ideas and more people to make things happen. Feel free to drop in on any of our meetings to check it out.

Say cheese! – We are starting a Facebook Family Album! Email your favorite family photos and pics of your Marine or Sailor to one of our FR Assistants, Sara, rct5fra.s6@gmail.com to have your pictures uploaded. Please allow a few days for our volunteer to get it up. While no tagging is allowed on DoD sites, feel free to show your love and support by making comments!



Back row: Brittini Nelles, Sarah McKinney, Andrea Long, Tiffany Trevino, Alyssa Hartmann, Soledad Loyola, Megan Martinez, Laura Blanchette
Seated front: Minnie Sierra, Kathryn Boyer, Angelina Parks, Melinda Perez

"Kids the babysitter's here!" Did you know that the Dept of Defense pays for military families to use Sittercity.com for FREE? Sittercity.com is a babysitting referral service so it's like going online-shopping for a babysitter. Sound strange to you? If it does, think again - all the babysitters are background checked so you can use the service with more confidence. View pictures and references and read other parents' reviews of babysitters. Scroll down to where you see the flag picture like the one here, search, find and interview a few good candidates to find the one your kids will love.



Be gentle with yourself - This especially applies to our deployed spouses with children who now act as single parents. Whatever ways work for you – a hot bath, a DVR marathon of your favorite TV shows, exercise, coffee with a friend, etc. Lean on your support networks to give you a lift when you feel low. When you don't know who to call, your FR Assistant or myself can give you referrals to some excellent resources.



Best always,

Kim Merkel

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The Chaplain's Corner

"Celebrating holidays together"

Dear RCT-5 families,

The holidays can be a difficult time, particularly during a long deployment. After all, this is a time of year we think of celebrating the holidays together. Not yet at the halfway point, it may be easy for you to allow yourself to get down and perhaps focus on the negatives. You may even very well feel that this Thanksgiving you don't have a whole lot to be thankful for. But Thanksgiving is a time when we reflect on the blessings we have – not what we would like to have.

Deployments have a way of reminding us of the things that are really important. When you're together with your loved one, it's easy to take each other for granted. Deployments remind us life's fleeting and change is the only certainty. Before I joined the military, I asked a buddy how he and his wife survived deployments: he told me they learned to make their time together 'prime time.' Rather than taking one another for granted, as so many couples do, deployments can be a blessing to help you and your partner truly appreciate one another.

Thanksgiving is a time to remember the things that are really important – our basic needs, those we love, and the joy we share with one another. Faith takes the focus off dwelling bitterly on what we don't have and instead responding to God out of loving gratitude for what we do. My wife's family has a tradition of thanking God at every meal for the blessings he's bestowed upon us. Their simple little prayer captures this sense of thankfulness and obligation to God for his goodness to us in the things we too often take for granted. It goes like this:



Cmdr. Mark S. Winward is the RCT-5 Regimental Chaplain. He is available anytime for pastoral counseling or personal support by contacting him at mark.winward@afg.usmc.mil.

For food and friends and happy days
Accept our gratitude and praise.
In helping others, Lord, may we
Repay our debt of love to Thee. Amen.

May God richly bless and keep you this
Thanksgiving season!

Faithfully yours,

'CHAPS' Winward

P.S. - My "Daily Inspiration" and other news related to the RCT-5 Religious Ministry Program are now available on our "Grizzly Chaps" FaceBook page, at: <http://www.facebook.com/GrizzlyChaps>

Salt Lake City Marine serves others at home, in Afghanistan

Story and Photos By Staff Sgt. Andrew Miller

CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Salt Lake City, Utah native, Marine Lance Cpl. Ricardo Medinaferrer, is currently serving a one year tour with Regimental Combat Team 5 in Afghanistan as a Personnel Administration and Retention specialist. Although he is one of the youngest Marines aboard Camp Dwyer at 18 years old, Medinaferrer has had a long, hard road to get to where he is today.

Not every family in America can be one of those perfect 1950s TV families. Medinaferrer was born in California, but with the economy heading south his mother, Beatrice, packed up him, his older sister Erica, and younger brother Manuel, and moved to Salt Lake City to live with an aunt.

Times were tough for everyone while they were there searching for a better life. Beatrice worked three jobs at times, and everyone chipped in when able to make ends meet. Medinaferrer remained loyal to his family throughout those hard times, taking it upon himself to be the man of the house.

"I was young, too young to work, so I had to do under-the-table jobs," he recalled. "I worked on cars, changing tires and doing oil changes, I moved furniture, I asked to mow lawns, I did some gardening, I did some photography work like baptisms and sweet sixteens, and I helped in daycares because, like me, some of those kids didn't have fathers either."

Parts of Salt Lake City provided the family with a breath of fresh air. The city of almost 180,000 residents offered just about everything an outdoor enthusiast could dream of: camping, hunting, hiking, biking, skiing and snowboarding.



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Lance Cpl. Ricardo Medinaferrer, a Personnel Administration and Retention Specialist with Regimental Combat Team 5, is currently serving a one year tour in southern Helmand province in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Medinaferrer, 18, is a native of Salt Lake City and graduated from East High School in 2010.

Unfortunately for Medinaferrer, it didn't turn out to be all that his family had imagined. They settled into his aunt's house in the neighborhood of Glendale in southwest Salt Lake City, only to find that in the past few years it had become one of the most crime ridden areas in the city and a hub for gang activity.

"It is a small neighborhood packed with crime," Medinaferrer said. "I had to stay cautious of what was going on around me. It was hard on me going from school back to my house without having something stolen or getting into trouble."

To counter the distractions around him, Medinaferrer made plenty of friends while attending East High School – the school he proudly boasts was "where Disney filmed all three High School Musicals." Medinaferrer spent his time with the bookworms, the jocks and the drama club. He saw his circle of friends as a chance to meet a variety of people while avoiding negative influences.

"I still keep in touch with most of those guys through Facebook and email," he said. "They all thought I was a superhero when I told them I joined the Marine Corps, like I could dodge bullets."

Throughout high school, Medinaferrer said that academics were his niche. He tried sports but was vertically challenged. He did, however, find success in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, a program to which he dedicated three years of his life.

"Everyone knew me from JROTC because I did color guards, ceremonies, speeches, and it ultimately had an impact on my decision to enlist," Medinaferrer said. "At first I just thought of it (JROTC) as nothing special, but once I started seeing how it worked and how each individual's roles made the whole military work that fascinated me because I wanted to be a part of something important and know that what I was doing was making a difference."

At 17 years old Medinaferrer graduated from East in 2010, a year earlier than his peers. Now eligible to enlist with his mother's permission, he locked himself in his room for a week, studying to build up his Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test score.

Medinaferrer tells stories of envying a distant cousin he saw in his Dress

See *SERVES* on Page 7



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Ricardo Medinaferrer, a Personnel Administration and Retention Specialist with Regimental Combat Team 5, is currently serving a one year tour in southern Helmand province in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Medinaferrer, 18, is a native of Salt Lake City and graduated from East High School in 2010.

SERVES from Page 6

Blues at a family gathering years ago. He remembers seeing drill instructors on television and wishing he could be a Marine.

He was about to get his wish.

After passing the ASVAB and obtaining his mother's permission, he enlisted and shipped to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in November 2010.

"When I told my family they thought I was crazy. They have never experienced anything positive like this," he said. "They have only experienced family or friends being locked away or having some kind of drug problem."

After recruit training Medinaferrer had a short-lived reunion with his friends and family.

"When I got home everyone was happy and proud of me," Medinaferrer said. "I visited friends and family, and a lot of

them had gone down hill since I left; either got locked up again or pregnant; just being lazy and getting kicked out of their homes. When they saw me and saw what I had accomplished in just three months it was like a light flipped on in their heads; if he can do it I can do it. I tried to be a good influence on them and told them that what they want in life really can be done."

After the brief visit home, Medinaferrer reported to Camp Johnson, Jacksonville, N.C. He would attend his Military Occupational Specialty school for two months of training to become a Personnel Administration and Retention specialist.

Upon graduating from his MOS school, Medinaferrer executed orders to Headquarters Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Camp Pendleton, Calif., June 1. Ironically, this was the same month he would have originally graduated high school.

Shortly after checking into 5th Marines, Medinaferrer was told he would be deploying to Afghanistan in a few short months. It was then that the young Marine realized he would have to grow up in a hurry. He had only a short time to learn his job and hone his organization and time management skills before the regiment deployed.

"My mom was so scared to hear of me coming over here," he said. "But she would be proud, knowing that if anything ever did happen, at least it would have been worth something. She doesn't even listen to music that much, but all of a sudden she was quoting Tupac telling me 'If you can't find something to live for, find something to die for.'"

Medinaferrer is currently operating with Regimental Combat Team 5 aboard Camp Dwyer in southern Helmand province. He believes that every MOS in the Marine Corps is important, and his work reflects this belief. Medinaferrer uses his organizational skills to maintain correspondence, manu-

als, awards, promotion documentation, payment procedures, and a number of other things that affect every Marine and sailor with RCT-5.

"My SNCOIC (staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge) reminds me everyday that it should feel good to lay in my rack at night and know that the work that got done today needed to be done," he said.

As busy as he stays in Afghanistan, Medinaferrer never forgets why he's doing what he's doing. His private fan club is waiting back home, and he never wants to let a single member down.

"My family is very proud of me, even more so I think since I am deployed," he said. "My brother looks up to me, his friends look up to me, my sister's friends look up to me, my mother's friends look up to me. Even though I am the youngest, almost all of them still look up to me."

His hard work, determination and positive outlook has led to respect from his supervisors as well.

"Medina is a good kid. He's a hard worker," said Gunnery Sgt. Victor Juarez, RCT-5 administration chief. "He's just always smiling about something."

Medinaferrer plans to focus his future on helping others. He plans to pursue a degree in Criminal Justice, Bio Technology, or another field that will allow him to positively influence others.

Editors Note: RCT-5 is assigned to 2nd Marine Division (Forward) which heads Task Force Leatherneck. The task force serves as the ground combat element of Regional Command (Southwest) and works in partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The unit is dedicated to securing the Afghan people, defeating insurgent forces and enabling ANSF assumption of security responsibilities within its area of operations in order to support the expansion of stability, development and legitimate governance.



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Jonathan Stoots with Regimental Combat Team 5, Motor Transportation, conducts maintenance on a vehicle aboard Camp Dwyer, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Oct. 19, 2011. The Marines conducted vehicle maintenance in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Photo by Lance Cpl. Daniel D. Kujanpaa



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Pete Wilson, (left) executive officer Regimental Combat Team 5 (RCT-5) awards Capt. Evan Ota, (right) the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (NAM) on Oct. 19, 2011 aboard Camp Dwyer, Helmand province, Afghanistan. Ota was awarded the NAM for his actions as platoon commander and executive officer for company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, from July 2008 to March 2011. Photo by Lance Cpl. Ammon W. Carter



CAMP GARMSIR, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Regimental Combat Team 5 Embedded Training Team Motor Transport Noncommissioned Officer Advisor Sgt. Brandon M. Richards, fights for control of the ball with two Afghan Army soldiers during a soccer match between the ANA and Marines with the ETT here, Oct. 21. The ANA and Marines play soccer and other sports at least once a week to build camaraderie between the two units. Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew W. Miller

Conference and groundbreaking reaffirm ANA, Marine partnership

Story and Photos By Staff Sgt. Andrew Miller

CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Afghan and Marine commanders from around southern Helmand province gathered for a commander's conference at Regimental Combat Team 5 headquarters here, Oct. 12-13.

Brigadier Gen. Mohammad Ali Shujaie, 1st Brigade, 215 Corps commanding general, and Col. Roger Turner, RCT-5 commanding officer, hosted Afghan National Army and Afghan Uniform Police commanders, as well as the commanding officers of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment and 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.

The conference provided an ideal opportunity for attendees to discuss the status of joint operations conducted by Afghan and coalition forces in Marjah, Nawa and Gamsir districts. Afghan and Marine commanders from each district brought their unique perspectives to discussions on security and stability operations in southern Helmand.

Turner kicked off the conference with a brief opening statement.

"In the short time I've been here I have been impressed with the solid performance of the 1st Brigade of the 215th Corps and the partnership they have with the Marines," he began. "The operations that the kandaks are moving forward on have been impressive and have been largely responsible for defeating the enemy in southern Helmand."

His remarks included a reminder to those present that there is still work to be done.

"We are positioned well to put a lot of pressure on the enemy this winter, to defeat them so when they try to come back next spring they have no capabilities," continued Turner. "Our objective over the next several months is to give the [ANA] brigade a posture for the long run and getting the facilities, logistics and command and control to match our operational capabilities."

Shujaie echoed Turner's message of progress and renewed focus on the mission at hand by Afghan and Marine forces alike.

"We hope that whatever the flaws and mistakes we have made in the past that we solve them here today so that in the future we are on

exactly the same page as we push forward," Shujaie said. "The purpose of this conference is to help with stability and remove any obstacles at every angle to help diminish the enemy."

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new 1/215 headquarters was conducted in conjunction with the conference. Afghan and Marine commanders attended the ceremony aboard the current brigade headquarters at Camp Gamsir, kicking off construction for this new 82,000 square meter facility.

Following an opening prayer by Lt. Col. Sultan Mohammad, 1/215 religious and cultural affairs officer, Shujaie took the podium to say a few words about the future home of the brigade.

"Today I am honored to attend such an important meeting," Shujaie began. "This groundbreaking is the beginning of a new base that will allow the soldiers of 1/215 to establish security and support for our area of operation."

After highlighting the importance of the new facility in maintaining security operations throughout southern Helmand, Shujaie made special mention of the effect a new brigade headquarters will have on his soldiers.

"Establishment of this camp is an important step in taking care of ANA soldiers," he said. "In the future, we look to continue the education of ANA soldiers. We hope to provide security as our Marine partners have taught us."

In his brief remarks from the podium, Turner echoed his Afghan counterpart's message of a sustained security effort led by the 1/215 soldiers.

"Only a few years ago, the people of Marjah, Nawa, Gamsir and Kahn Neshin were terrorized by the enemies of Afghanistan. The people of southern Helmand now live in peace and

See CONFERENCE on Page 11



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Afghan National Army Brig. Gen. Muhammad Ali Shujaie (right), 1st Brigade, 215 Corps commanding general, and U.S. Marine Corps Col. Roger Turner, Regimental Combat Team 5 commanding officer, prepare for opening remarks during a commander's conference held here, Oct. 12-13. Shujaie and Turner hosted ANA and Afghan Uniform Police commanders, as well as commanding officers of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment and 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. The conference provided an ideal opportunity for the attendees to discuss the status of joint operations conducted by Afghan and coalition forces in Marjah, Nawa and Gamsir districts. Afghan and Marine commanders from each district brought their unique perspectives to discussions on security and stability operations in southern Helmand.



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – After a hard day's work, Lance Cpl. Adam Fox, an infantryman and dog handler with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, plays a game of fetch with Cpl. Jett, an improvised explosive device detection dog, here, October 23. Fox, a 21-year-old native of Meriden, Conn., and Jett, a chocolate Labrador retriever, work together to protect Marines at their post from IED threats. The IED detection team spends up to 35 hours a week on various drills, honing their communications skills and Jett's extraordinary detection abilities.

Detection team sharpens skills, protects Marines from IED

Story and Photos By Lance Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Maintaining a Marine's warfighting skills and killer instincts requires rigorous practice and dedication, which means that training doesn't stop, even in a combat zone.

Putting in the hours of training to better detect improvised explosive device threats are critical for both Lance Cpl. Adam Fox, an infantryman and dog handler with Company C, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment and Cpl. Jett, an IED detection dog.

The cost for a missed scent or misinterpreted command is high in their line of work.

"We spend up to thirty-five hours on drills and exercises every week," said Fox, a 21-year-old native of Meriden, Conn. "It keeps his odor and detection skills up to date and also my command techniques."

Before their partnership began in June, Jett, a choco-

late Labrador retriever, had already received extensive training at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., said Fox.

Jett can be commanded verbally, with a whistle or with hand-and-arm signals. His talents are best utilized by pushing far out in front of Marines patrolling on foot, setting up cordons around vehicles and searching the interior and exterior of buildings.

"Both of us need to work hard," said Fox. "Otherwise he won't be able to keep up during patrols or he won't listen to my commands."

The pair begins each day with a series of drills, designed to keep Jett healthy and his mind fresh. Their morning drills usually involve a form of fetch to get Jett's blood pumping for work.

Throughout the day they find time to work on odor

See SKILLS on Page 11



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Lance Cpl. Adam Fox, an infantryman and dog handler with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, rewards Cpl. Jett, an improvised explosive device detection dog, with a toy during a break from training here, October 23. Fox, a 21-year-old native of Meriden, Conn., and Jett, a chocolate Labrador retriever, work together to protect Marines at their post from IED threats. The IED detection team spends up to 35 hours a week on various drills, honing their communications skills and Jett's extraordinary detection abilities.

SKILLS from Page 10

drills, keeping his nose alert to the various odors of components used to make IEDs. Fox digs a hole and buries a sample of homemade explosive materials, often masking the odor with various items to throw Jett off the scent.

"If we don't keep up with these drills, he will lose his skills and obedience and become just like a normal pet," said Fox.

Obedience drills are one of the more critical exercises for this IED detection team because it helps build the communication skills between dog and handler.

One of the drills is called the wagon wheel. Fox first strategically places toys in different directions. Then, with Jett waiting by his side, Fox uses hand signals to command the Labrador to fetch a toy in one particular direction.

"Getting to know each other is part of the training," said Fox. "Jett responds to my body language, so it's important that I'm into the drills, so he's into it too."

But it's not all work and no play for Jett.

"Labs are naturally social," said Fox. "He needs to be praised if

he's working. If he isn't, he loses the drive to hunt and he won't be able to function like a well oiled machine."

With Fox at the reins and Jett's sharp nose for explosives, Marines patrolling the rugged southern Helmand landscape have extra peace of mind when this capable IED detection team is at their side.

Editor's note: Charlie Company, First Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, is currently assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5, 2nd Marine Division (Forward), which heads Task Force Leatherneck. The task force serves as the ground combat element of Regional Command (Southwest) and works in partnership with the Afghan National Security Force and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The unit is dedicated to securing the Afghan people, defeating insurgent forces, and enabling ANSF assumption of security responsibilities within its area of operations in order to support the expansion of stability, development and legitimate governance.

CONFERENCE from Page 9

security thanks to brave ANA soldiers," Turner said. "With the construction of this new headquarters, I am confident that this brigade will be able to provide security in the long term."

With speeches from the podium concluded, ANA soldiers and Marines crowded around the first few shovelfuls of dirt were removed, marking the beginning of construction. Two foundation stones, ornately wrapped in decorative paper, were placed in the freshly dug hole.

"In Afghan culture, when a king or govern-

ment official lays down the foundation of a public project, they usually put gold or something of a value in the foundation," explained Dauod Parwani, RCT-5 cultural advisor. "Today the general wrapped the first bricks of the foundation with gift papers to display his hope that this foundation will be used and serve for the principles on which it was built."

Turner assisted in laying the foundation stones as the ceremony came to a close.

"I am confident that this brigade will be able to provide security for southern Helmand in the long term," said Turner. "This brigade will defeat the enemies of Afghanistan, and let this stone be the first step."

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SITREP from Page 1

Brigadier Gen. Mohammad Ali Shujaie, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps commanding general, and Col. Roger Turner, RCT-5 commanding officer, hosted ANA and Afghan Uniformed Police commanders, as well as Marine commanders operating in southern Helmand.

The conference provided an ideal opportunity for attendees to discuss the status of joint operations conducted by Afghan and coalition forces in Marjah, Nawa and Garmsir districts. Afghan and Marine commanders from each district brought their unique perspectives to discussions on security and stability operations.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new 1/215 headquarters was conducted in conjunction with the conference. Afghan and Marine commanders attended the ceremony aboard the current brigade headquarters at Camp Garmsir, kicking off construction for this new 82,000 square meter facility.

The Grizzly Gouge will keep you informed on the actions and operations of RCT-5 Marines and Sailors for the duration of their deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The next edition of the Gouge is scheduled to be released the first week of December. The RCT-5 Public Affairs Office will continue to publish stories and photos detailing RCT-5's deployment from beginning to end. The two best places to see periodic coverage of events from southern Helmand province are the official RCT-5 Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RegimentalCombatTeam5) and the RCT-5 DVIDS page (<http://www.dvidshub.net/units/RCT5-MD>).

Congratulations to the following Marines promoted during the month of October:

Lance Cpl. Alexander Akhromtsev
Lance Cpl. Jaron M. Cofield
Lance Cpl. Stefan A. Donawa
Lance Cpl. Kendrick K. Johnson
Lance Cpl. Shawn M. Swigert
Lance Cpl. Matthew J. Truitt
Lance Cpl. Michael L. Wood
Cpl. Ivan D. Garciamunoz
Cpl. Brent G. Garrison
Cpl. Forrest L. Green
Cpl. Patrick J. Moley
Cpl. Joseph L. Tate
Capt. Evan Z. Ota
Lt.Col. John J. Mazzarella



CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Cameron Martinez (right) and Cpl. Anthony Suarez (left), Motor Transport Platoon, Regimental Combat Team 5, load an M240 Bravo while conducting a machine gun range here, Sept. 26. The Marines conducted this training to maintain a state of combat readiness. Photo by Lance Cpl. Daniel D. Kujanpaa`

Upcoming Events:

November: "Miles for Marines" – we are putting together 5K and 10K teams to walk/run/stroll the Dana Point Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving morning.

"Ladies Night Out" - November 10th birthday dinner event at Olive Garden in Carlsbad, CA. Sign up with FR Assistant, KC Winward: rct5fra.s1s2@gmail.com

December: Christmas party on December 10, 4 PM - 7 PM (More details later this month).

From the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group

Dear 5th Marines Family:

The Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group is here for YOU! Many of you already know of our existence, but for those of you who don't, the City of Dana Point adopted the 5th Marine Regiment in 2004. We are fortunate to have you as our Adoptive Unit, but with this honor and distinction goes an enormous amount of responsibility and commitment. Our mission is simple, to provide Support and Outreach to the 5th Marines & Sailors when deployed, and to take care of your families living in the Camp Pendleton area. Please check out our website at www.danapoint5thmarines.com for more information.

Semper Fi,
Terry Rifkin
Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group
Director of Support and Outreach